



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Grays Harbor *National Wildlife Refuge*

Black River Unit *of Billy Frank Jr. Nisqually* *National Wildlife Refuge*

Planning Update 4, October 2016



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Black-bellied plover

Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan is Available

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (Service) draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment (CCP/EA) for Grays Harbor National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge) and Black River Unit of Billy Frank Jr. Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge (Unit) is available for public comments.

Between now and November 25, 2016, citizens, organizations and agencies can review and comment on the draft CCP/EA, which includes an analysis of the Refuge's and Unit's management alternatives. Comments may be made via email at the address on the back page or by U.S. mail.

After we receive public comments, we will analyze and address them, finalize the CCP, and publish it with the selected management alternative. The final CCP will guide Refuge and Unit management for 15 years or until revised; actions will be implemented as funding becomes available.

Alternatives Evaluated

We evaluated two management alternatives for both the Refuge and the Unit. Alternative 1, the

no-action alternative, would not change any management actions; things would continue on the present course.

Alternative 2, identified as the preferred alternative, would include new or modified management actions that we believe would best fulfill Refuge and Unit purposes and goals.

The alternatives are compared in the tables on pages 3 through 5.

We want your comments!
Your participation is critical to this planning process!

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Highlights of the Alternatives

Grays Harbor National Wildlife Refuge

For Grays Harbor Refuge, planning for a new nature center is included in both alternatives. We will continue to work with partners and review the current nature center plan and develop a viable plan for the center that includes design, funding, and operations. If constructed, the Refuge would work with partners to develop biological, ecological, and cultural interpretive and educational content.

Under the preferred alternative, an artificial berm located at the northwest portion of the Refuge would be removed to improve

the quality of 15–20 acres of salt marsh habitat. Management of other habitats (tidal open water, intertidal mudflats, and salt and brackish marsh) would continue as currently managed with greater emphasis on invasive species management and pursuing priority scientific inventory, monitoring, and research needs. We would work with partners to better understand the physical processes, for example, the changes in habitat due to sedimentation and the effects on shorebird life history requirements.

In addition to continuing the actions described under Alternative 1, the Refuge would work with the Port of Grays Harbor to target facility improvements for visitors, including: improvements to the parking area; viewing and interpretive opportunities along the Port of Grays Harbor road; expanding the Sandpiper Trail, additional viewing platforms, and interpretive panels. The environmental education, interpretation, outreach, and volunteer programs would be further developed as staffing allows.

Black River Unit of Billy Frank Jr. Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge

Under both alternatives, we would work with the Washington Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) to develop an interagency agreement, or similar instrument, that promotes cooperative management of the river channel between WDNR and the Service within the approved Unit boundary.

The preferred alternative for the Unit offers improved protection of fish and wildlife that use the Unit's Black River channel and tributaries. We would partner with other agencies to sustain and enhance hydrological conditions on the river, including identifying and removing or replacing barriers that deter fish passage.

We would conduct inventories of plant and animal species that inhabit bogs, and evaluate potential translocation of rare species, including marsh sandwort and water howelia. If appropriate, we would develop a package to propose the bog habitat as a Research Natural Area.

Oregon spotted frog eggs would be surveyed to assess population status and the effects of invasive reed canarygrass. Our efforts to eradicate or control invasive species would include periodic monitoring to evaluate the efficacy of nonnative plant control efforts in specific wetland habitats and monitoring wildlife responses over time.

Areas within the Unit would be opened to public use, including wildlife observation, interpretation, and wildlife photography. Outreach and volunteer programs would be developed for refuge programs. Construction of a short trail and platform on the east of Endicott Road and a vehicle pull-off area on the west side of Endicott Road will provide interpretive viewing opportunities. The Service would also establish a cooperative agreement with Thurston County to develop a boat launch, small parking area, and new kiosk with interpretive signs on the southeastern side of the 123rd Avenue bridge.



© Kelly Colgan Azar

Yellow-rumped warbler



© Budgora

Sora

Grays Harbor NWR Summary of Alternatives by Issue

Theme/Issue	Alternative 1 No-Action Alternative (Current Management)	Alternative 2 Preferred Alternative
Estuarine Habitats		
Tidal open water	Protect 723 acres of open water and channel habitat	Same as Alternative 1, plus conduct IPM program (Integrated Pest Management)
Intertidal mudflats	Protect 497 acres of intertidal mudflats and maintain limited IPM program	Same as Alternative 1, plus increase IPM program
Tidal salt and brackish marsh	Protect 156 acres of tidal salt and brackish marsh habitat and maintain IPM program. Remove constructed berm and restore tidal circulation to 15–20 acres	Same as Alternative 1, plus increase IPM program
Forest Habitat		
Mixed forest	Protect 95 acres of mixed forest habitat and maintain limited IPM program	Same as Alternative 1, plus increase IPM program and additional partnerships to control knotweed
Estuary and Ecosystem		
Partnerships	Maintain current partnerships	Same as Alternative 1, plus enhance and develop new partnerships and initiatives for conservation purposes
Inventories, Monitoring, and Research		
Inventory and monitoring	Develop and implement an Inventory and Monitoring Plan; continue shorebird monitoring as it applies to Refuge management decisions	Same as Alternative 1, plus initiate and support additional monitoring opportunities and projects
Research	Continue support of research opportunities as they apply to Refuge management decisions	Same as Alternative 1, plus initiate and support research opportunities where they contribute to understanding shorebird habitat use, sedimentation rates, and the effects of climate change on shorebird habitat and shorebird ecology
Visitor Services		
Welcoming and orientation	Maintain current facilities, signs, outreach materials	Same as Alternative 1, plus update signs and improve parking, visibility, and outreach materials
Wildlife observation and photography	Collaborate with Port of Grays Harbor to maintain access to the Sandpiper Trail and maintain current facilities	Same as Alternative 1, plus coordinate with Port of Grays Harbor and Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to install additional viewing platforms on Refuge lands adjacent to the blacktop road; explore extension of the Sandpiper Trail spur; increase viewing opportunities at the parking area; and work with partners to consider the feasibility of a bike/pedestrian trail along Paulson Road
Interpretation	Maintain current interpretive panels and continue to support interpretation and provide guided walks during the Shorebird and Nature Festival	Same as Alternative 1, plus develop new interpretive panels for Sandpiper Trail and other viewing areas and work with partners to provide guided walks and other interpretive programs for the public
Environmental education	Contact and coordinate participation by teachers and students in Grays Harbor County in the Refuge's environmental education program; conduct annual	Same as Alternative 1, plus hire a permanent education specialist and coordinate curriculum and additional programs throughout the county; explore ways to

Theme/Issue	Alternative 1 No-Action Alternative (Current Management)	Alternative 2 Preferred Alternative
	Shorebird and Nature Festival Poster Contest; and maintain educator resources and trainings	secure stable funding for an education coordinator; improve and expand teacher training opportunities
Volunteer Program and Partnerships		
Refuge volunteers	Maintain current training and volunteer opportunities	Same as Alternative 1, plus expand efforts to recruit and train volunteers to participate fully in Refuge programs
Partnerships	Maintain partnerships with existing groups, organizations, and agencies	Same as Alternative 1, plus identify new local partnerships to support visitor services programs
Outreach		
Outreach programs and events	Maintain current efforts with the Grays Harbor Shorebird and Nature Festival	Same as Alternative 1, plus identify new opportunities for programs and events in the community and develop ways to reach nontraditional audiences

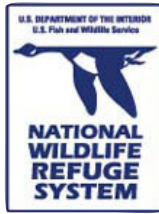
Black River Unit Summary of Alternatives by Issue

Theme/Issue	Alternative 1 No-Action Alternative (Current Management)	Alternative 2 Preferred Alternative
Aquatic Habitats		
River channel habitat	Alongside WDNR, protect 7.5 miles of river channel habitat and maintain limited IPM program	Same as Alternative 1, plus increase IPM program; complete a Water Resources Inventory and Assessment
Tributary channel habitat	Protect 6–16 miles of tributary channel habitat and maintain limited IPM program	Same as Alternative 1, plus increase IPM program and habitat enhancement
Bog habitat	Protect 56 acres of bog habitat	Same as Alternative 1, plus conduct baseline inventories and Water Resources Inventory and Assessment; conduct IPM program; introduce rare plant species as appropriate; evaluate the designation of an RNA if warranted
Shrub swamp habitat	Protect 512 acres of shrub swamp habitat and maintain limited IPM program	Same as Alternative 1, plus increase IPM program
Riparian forest habitat	Protect 265 acres of riparian habitat and maintain limited IPM program	Same as Alternative 1, plus increase IPM program
Emergent marsh habitat	Protect 34 acres of emergent marsh habitat and maintain limited IPM program	Same as Alternative 1, plus improve habitat for Oregon spotted frog; increase IPM program
Seasonally flooded, nonnative grassland habitat	Protect 82 acres of seasonally flooded, nonnative grassland habitat and maintain limited IPM program	Same as Alternative 1, plus improve habitat for Oregon spotted frog; evaluate and enhance seasonally ponded areas and improve water management capabilities as needed; increase IPM program
Upland Habitats		
Dry, nonnative grassland habitat	Protect 163 acres of nonnative grassland habitat and maintain limited IPM program	Same as Alternative 1, plus plant big leaf maples and/or Garry oaks where appropriate; enhance up to 15 acres (within the 163 acres) with native plants; increase IPM program

Theme/Issue	Alternative 1 No-Action Alternative (Current Management)	Alternative 2 Preferred Alternative
Mixed forest habitat	Protect 394 acres of mixed forest habitat and maintain limited IPM program	Same as Alternative 1, plus enhance 5–10 acres (within the 394 acres) and increase IPM program
Watershed and Ecosystem		
Partnerships	Maintain current partnerships	Same as Alternative 1, plus enhance and develop new partnerships and initiatives for conservation purposes
Inventories, Monitoring, and Research		
Inventory and monitoring	Develop and implement an Inventory and Monitoring Plan; continue inventory and monitoring projects as they apply to Refuge management decisions	Same as Alternative 1, plus initiate and support additional monitoring opportunities and projects
Research	Limited current research	Initiate and support research opportunities where they contribute to understanding of Unit resources and management
Visitor Services		
Welcome and orientation	No visitor facilities or outreach materials	Develop print and electronic media outreach materials; improve Unit visibility; install signs
Wildlife observation and photography and educational programs	No visitor facilities or environmental education programs	Construct vehicle pull-off area with interpretive signs for viewing wildlife on the west side of Endicott Road; install small parking area, kiosk, viewing platform, short walking trail on east side of Endicott Road; identify links to Regional Trail System in coordination with Thurston County; establish a cooperative agreement with the county to develop a boat launch, small parking area, and new kiosk and interpretive signs at 123 rd Avenue bridge; partner with local organizations to incorporate Unit messages into their programs
Volunteer Program and Partnerships		
Volunteer program	No volunteer program	Develop and promote a Unit volunteer program, including efforts to recruit and train volunteers
Partnerships program	No partnership program	Build community partnerships to support Unit programs



Bowerman Basin at Grays Harbor National Wildlife Refuge



Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge Complex
100 Brown Farm Road
Olympia, WA 98516

The draft CCP/EA is online

- https://www.fws.gov/refuge/Grays_Harbor/what_we_do/planning.html
- https://www.fws.gov/refuge/Billy_Frank_Jr_Nisqually/what_we_do/planning.html

Also at these libraries

- **Hoquiam Timberland Library**
420 7th Street, Hoquiam, WA 98550
- **Aberdeen Timberland Library**
121 East Market Street,
Aberdeen, WA 98520
- **Tumwater Timberland Library,**
7023 New Market Street,
Tumwater, WA 98501

Limited printed copies or CDs

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Send your comments

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Muskrat